

STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

HEALTH ALERT NETWORK BROADCAST

MESSAGE ID: MMDDYY HH:MM

FROM: CO-CDPHE

SUBJECT: HAN Advisory – Patient Exposure to Hepatitis C Through the Diversion of Drugs and Possible Unsafe Injection Practices at a Hospital

RECIPIENTS: Local Public Health Agencies, local physicians, IPs, and EDs

RECIPIENT INSTRUCTIONS: Local Health Departments – please forward to healthcare providers, including primary care providers in your jurisdiction

This message can also be found on www.satool.org/group/cohan/home.

HEALTH ADVISORY

Potential Patient Exposure to Hepatitis C Through the Diversion of Drugs and Possible Unsafe Injection Practices by a Former Employee at Poudre Valley Hospital December 29, 2013

***** Health care providers: Please distribute widely in your office*****

KEY POINTS:

- In November 2013, a health care worker at Poudre Valley Hospital was terminated following a suspension for suspected drug diversion and a failed a drug screen.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) confirmed that the health care worker had been infected with hepatitis C with symptom onset beginning in March, 2012. However, the hepatitis C virus has not been detected following repeated tests from August 28, 2012 through November 21, 2013.
- CDPHE has not identified any other cases suggesting that patients were infected with hepatitis C while at Poudre Valley Hospital.
- It has not been determined if the health care worker employed any unsafe medical practices (i.e. needle reuse) that could have transmitted a hepatitis C infection to patients. The health care worker worked in the ICU and as part of a ICU Care Team.
- The hospital has identified patients that received controlled injectable or IV drugs from September 9, 2011 through August 28, 2012 on the days and locations where the health care employee worked. The hospital is notifying these patients that they need to be tested for hepatitis C and helping arrange for free testing.
- **For further questions regarding this incident, health care providers and patients can call the Colorado Health Emergency Line for Public Information (COHELP) at 1-877-462-2911.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In November, 2013, Poudre Valley Hospital notified the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment that it was investigating a drug diversion case. A health care worker in the intensive care unit was suspected of diverting patient drugs for personal use. The drug screen detected medications that are listed under the Federal Controlled Substances Act. The health care worker did not have a prescription for these medications.

The hospital identified discrepancies in both the medication distribution system and drug waste. The medications were likely used for injections or intravenous pain management. Investigators cannot be sure how the health care worker obtained or used these medications. While it is likely that full vials of drugs were taken or drugs were drawn from leftover patient medications (i.e waste), investigators cannot be certain that the health care worker observed safe injection practices.

The health care worker is not infected with HIV or hepatitis B but was infected with hepatitis C. The health care worker's onset of symptoms was reported to be March 1, 2012. Following treatment for hepatitis C, repeated testing did not detect hepatitis C in the HCW from August 28, 2012 thru November of 2013.

The investigation is ongoing. State and local public health agencies are working with the hospital to assure that patients are appropriately notified of their possible risk of exposure to hepatitis C and offered testing. Patients that may have been exposed to hepatitis C from the former employee and health care worker are being notified by letter.

The hospital is located at 1024 Lemay Ave, Fort Collins, Colorado.

RECOMMENDATIONS / GUIDANCE:

In recognition of possible exposure to hepatitis C by the health care worker, Poudre Valley Hospital and public health authorities are recommending hepatitis C testing for certain adult patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or who were cared for by the ICU Care team and who received controlled injectable drugs from September 9, 2011 through August 28, 2012.

Patients will receive a letter if they were possibly exposed to hepatitis C while at Poudre Valley Hospital. The hospital will help them arrange for free testing. Patients **must have** a letter from Poudre Valley Hospital to receive testing, because the letter will serve as the test order.

If you have a patient that is concerned about this notification, they can gather additional information through the Colorado Health Emergency Line (COHELP) at **1-877-462-2911**.

Your patients may prefer to be tested by their primary care provider. Recommended testing includes:

- Hepatitis C antibody. If positive, follow-up with a hepatitis C RNA (quantitative or qualitative)
- If the HCV RNA is positive, the patient genotype should be determined and liver function should be evaluated.

Positive tests for hepatitis C should be reported to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (303-692-2780 or 1-800-866-2759) or your county health department. Hepatitis C is a reportable condition in Colorado. Please specify that this patient was tested as a part of the Poudre Valley Hospital patient notification.

Public health also recommends that providers do the following:

- Provide education to patients on the risks of hepatitis C. Resources for patient education materials are provided below. Also, please note that the Colorado Health Emergency Line for Public Information (COHELP) will be activated to help with general patient education. Patients can be referred to 1-877-462-2911 if they have further questions regarding this incident.
- Refer patients with positive test results for ongoing care.
- Review medication control and safe injection practices with your own staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For further questions regarding this incident, health care providers and patients can call the Colorado Health Emergency Line for Public Information (COHELP) at 1-877-462-2911.

For further information:

See attached copy of the patient notification letter.

Hepatitis C

- <http://www.hepatitiscolorado.info>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm>
- Patient education:
 - General information: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCGeneralFactSheet.pdf>
 - Testing information: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/PDFs/HepCTesting-Diagnosis.pdf>

Injection safety

- <http://tinyurl.com/CO-injectionsafety>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/>
- <http://www.oneandonlycampaign.org/>